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Notes From The Underground

A FREE PUBLICATION

15 years of Support to the Transgender Community (M to F / F to M)

CONTENTS

President's Note by Jan Hobbs 1

15th Anniversary, Key Note Speech by Teddy Michaels 2

Editor's Notes by Margo Ross 5

Congratulation, Gender Mosaic. 15 years WOW by Joanne Law 6

Commitment on Commitment by Samantha Anne Perrin 7

Reflection, by Kaitlin Acres, Ombudsperson 8

The Ring of Love by Joanne Law 9

The Gender Variant Phenomenon--A Developmental Review by Anne Vitale PhD . 10

NEW OPPORTUNITY Wives and Significant Others of TG People 20

It Is Your Mail Box 20

Your Executive 20

Notes From The President: Jan Hobbs

From the first time I came to a meeting of Gender Mosaic I felt that I had found a place where I belonged. There are many members who made me feel that I was an important person and that my opinions and viewpoints were valued. There has never, in the four years since, been a time where I did not feel that GM was not a part of my life. I have been the secretary, the person who answered the phone line, the e-mail respondent, 1st vice-president and am now serving my second term as president.

During the years since I joined, I have had the pleasure of meeting many people who are just realizing who they are and have enjoyed witnessing their growth into the perfect person they knew they were. I have been privileged in meeting and knowing both FTM and MTF persons and seeing how content they are once they know themselves.

I have attended meetings of the Police Liaison Committee, PFLAG, NAWL conference and the committee to develop a GLBT centre as a representative of Gender Mosaic. I have had the opportunity to speak at Ottawa University and be present at Carleton University during their Pride week celebrations. I have spoken to students in pre-health studies at Algonquin College. I have spoken to students in the public and catholic high schools. During all these opportunities I have always been proud to inform people about being transgendered and my association with Gender Mosaic.

Over the last year I have been a witness to many new and

exciting developments in acceptance and inclusion of transgender rights. The City of Ottawa's Equity and Diversity Policy was adopted on November 13, 2002, which includes transgendered individuals under designated groups with relation to discrimination. Gender Mosaic played an important role in this decision as we invited Alex Munter to come meet us and discuss with us our difficulties with relation to acceptance.

In October, Nunavut became the first province or territory to enact legislation, Bill 1, which prohibits discrimination inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. Women's shelters in Ottawa started to accept transgendered youth. At present there is a bill in discussion in Canada's Parliament, which has the inclusion of transgender as a direct result of a meeting with Svend Robinson and Gender Mosaic executive members.

The past growth and longevity of Gender Mosaic and its future are all results of its members and their belief in themselves. I hope to be present for the 20th and future celebrations of Gender Mosaic. However, I look forward to the day when a support group for transgendered persons is no longer a necessity but just a fun occasion.

15th Anniversary
Key Note Speech by Teddy Michaels

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen…in all your many lovely and handsome manifestations.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to say a few words to you this evening, although as you've heard I'm up here more for my longevity than I am for any particular brilliance on my part.

I know it's a cliché to begin my speech by saying how honoured I am to speak to you, but I think it's appropriate when you consider how far transgendered people have come in the 15 years since Gender Mosaic began. Whatever progress we have made wouldn't have happened at all if our non-transgendered friends and supporters didn't meet us halfway. So I salute all of you and I thank you for coming. It's not often that a speaker has the advantage of looking around and feeling that she has the support of a roomful of generous people.

We're here to celebrate an organization that has had a positive influence on our lives, on the lives of our friends or family members and on the community as a whole. As a transgender organization, Gender Mosaic is of course under appreciated. Not everyone believes that transgendered people have a role to play in our community. But there are many more believers now than there were 15 years ago. So tonight we celebrate the progress we've made with the people who have helped us make it.

The first meeting of Gender Mosaic, which at that time was called New Ottawa Women, was held Wednesday, May 4th, 1988. There were six people present, and as you know, I was one of them. Our founder was Judy Kearns, who I'm pleased to say is also with us tonight. In 1988 Judy visited Orlando Florida and while there she was welcomed by the local transgender group. She came home incredulous that Orlando should have a transgender organization while Ottawa - "Canada's capital!" she used to say to me – didn't have one. So Judy got to work. She obtained contacts from a California-based North America wide organization called Society for the Second Self and convinced Pink Triangle Service here in Ottawa that she was a reliable contact to whom they could refer transgendered people.

After that first meeting I described the momentous effect this event had on me in my diary. "Judy was mightily encouraged by our first meeting, but I felt as if I'd seen it all before. She's been getting a lot of phone calls and seems optimistic that these phone calls

will materialize into people. I know, however, what a paranoid lot trannies are and have adopted a "show me" attitude. I have every intention of supporting her efforts, but for the time being I don't believe it's going to change my life much."

Well, that smug prediction turned out to be dead wrong, but you have to understand a little of where I was coming from.

Throughout the early eighties transgendered groups came and went with regularity. I can't remember the number of times I went to someone's apartment or to some motel room on the strength of a rumour that someone was starting a transgender group. Sometimes these things started with great promise but died before a next meeting happened. Sometimes three of us showed up and it died on the spot.

Being transgendered in the 1980s wasn't much fun. There weren't many places we could go. Most of us were poor. Some of us were afraid of being thrown out of our apartments if we were discovered. And if someone had a decent place where we could meet, we quickly became our own worst enemies. There wasn't much cohesiveness between the various groups that now come under the transgender umbrella. We had very little contact with the gay and lesbian community. Our respective communities were still resentful of the stereotypes that saddled us and from which we wanted to break free. A friend of mine summed up our relationship with the gay and lesbian community this way: she said, "We give each other a bad reputation."

One evening, after attending a small and cheerless social event held in some low-brow motel, I wrote in my diary that it felt like we had been huddled away like dissidents in Moscow, with our chances of changing the regime about as hopeless.

Well, the Berlin Wall has come down and now I'm looking out at a roomful of supportive people. I can't tell you how happy I am that my grim outlook was proven wrong. I can't tell you how honoured I am that you are here to support us.

I should explain also before I paint a completely dismal picture that it wasn't all negative. Human beings are a brave and resilient lot. Before Gender Mosaic, I was lucky enough to meet a few transgendered people who were living their lives with integrity. There are always a few people who make a difference, no matter how great the obstacles they have to face. These people had a positive influence over me, a positive influence over a great many people. Because of them, I met friends that I have to this day, many of whom are in the crowd tonight. It's the theme of "It's a Wonderful Life" played over and over again. Good people do make a difference, even if no one notices. And good organizations make a difference too.

Nevertheless, I'm sure you understand a little why I was not especially confident that Gender Mosaic would last very long. Throughout that hot, muggy summer of 1988, our membership stalled at about 12 people, only six to eight of which would show up at any given time. Nevertheless, the ever confident Judy was encouraging me to publish our first newsletter, which seemed to me a little premature.

I still had a lot of doubts. Judy lived in a townhouse in west end Ottawa – Nepean at the time. There was a large common parking lot out front and a limited number of visitor parking spots. It was excruciating having to walk by the families plopped out in lawn chairs in front of their homes with your makeup melting in the full glare of the summer sun.

Even worse, if the visitor parking section was full, you had to park on the street and walk what seemed like a quarter mile to her place.

Despite these drawbacks, there were a lot of good things going

on. Judy's house number, for example, was 38B, a good bra size that provided us with infinite amusement and somehow seemed to be a good omen. And the people who showed up were committed to making it work. We all became quick friends.

In the fall, things began to move. The people who had phoned began showing up. I remember arriving a little late one night and Judy's place was jammed! People everywhere. It was so exciting. If you've ever been among a crowd of newly liberated people who have spent most of their lives repressed and oppressed you'll know how invigorating it is to be swept up in this great rush of positive energy.

Finally I became convinced. The next month I put out our first newsletter. In it I wrote – perhaps a little pompously – that "the unqualified support of the members for one another has laid the foundation for what we hope will be a durable association."

Well, look at us now!
Since then I've often wondered why Gender Mosaic survived those early years when so many trans groups before it failed and I'm convinced a lot had to do with the fact that we had no rules. Now this might not seem especially desirable, but the transgender community at the time was even more fractious than it is today. There is a world of difference between a heterosexual cross-dressers and a transsexual. The feeling was that this difference couldn't be easily bridged.
Initially, Gender Mosaic began as a chapter of a California based heterosexual cross-dressers organization, but that plan was tossed out the window very early. Judy was a democrat. We were all democrats. If you were a good person, you were in. I remember she sent me off to screen my first trannie to see whether she'd be an acceptable member. I was little uneasy. Belinda was a little more – how can I say this? – flamboyant than some of our more conservative members. I thought I should get to the next meeting early to explain why I had allowed her to join, but found she had arrived already, had tottered across the parking lot in broad daylight in her spike heels and an outfit that bore a striking resemblance to a maid's uniform. I went in prepared for the worst only to find Belinda holding court in the living room and everyone getting along swimmingly. No problem! Belinda became a valuable member of Gender Mosaic, and a future editor of the newsletter. I had underestimated the openness of the members, but everyone who attended those early meetings could feel that the welcome was genuine.

Nevertheless, it is true that at first we made a half-hearted effort to institute some rules. Initially, Judy hoped members would be discreet. She suggested that they might want to change to their preferred gender at her house if they weren't especially passable, but when that didn't happen Judy more or less shrugged her shoulders, said "Oh well" and that so-called rule went out the window very quickly. In the first six months of Gender Mosaic we had pretty well every member of the transgender community represented and though Gender Mosaic is significantly slanted toward male to female transgendered people, that tradition of openness continues to this day. The course of this organization hasn't always gone smoothly. It's had numerous ups and downs over the years, and the downs have been serious enough that its survival has sometimes been questionable.

We've had our share of heated exchanges. (Believe me when I say transgendered people are an opinionated lot.) We've seen periods of dwindling membership. We've seen some people burn out from taking on too much. I sometimes think luck has had a big part to play in our being here to celebrate our 15th anniversary. But beyond that there has also always been someone willing to take up the torch, and sometimes just in the nick of time.

That's the trouble with dropping names like I've been doing. Inevitably someone gets left out. Gender Mosaic would not have survived this long if there weren't many people who made huge contributions. Good people make a difference. And good people together make a great organization.

Which brings me in a roundabout way to Joanne Law. (You know I couldn't possibly complete this story without bringing up Joanne's name.)

Joanne came to Gender Mosaic in the fall of 1988. In 1990 she organized the first of her annual fall barbecues in the Gatineau Hills near Cantley. Gender Mosaic has always been an excellent social organization and Joanne's barbecues were some of our more memorable events. The guest list included people from Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City, some of whom have gone on to become transgender activists in their own communities. It was a strong signal that Joanne was eager to do more. Joanne became president in 1992. At that time I wrote in the newsletter that her "enthusiasm makes me think that I'm the sputtering relay runner passing the baton to the runner with the full head of steam."

What a head of steam!
Joanne gave Gender Mosaic its public face. She worked with the Ottawa Police. She made connections with the gay and lesbian community. She worked with the Pride Committee. She hosted her radio show on CKCU. Joanne made Gender Mosaic an outward looking organization and in doing so helped to introduce more transgendered people into the greater community of Ottawa-Gatineau. And I trust no one will be surprised when I tell you that Joanne was the principal organizer of the celebrations this evening. Although I've become the unofficial chronicler of Gender Mosaic even I don't know everything she's done, but I know we couldn't have been luckier. She's brave, personable and perpetually upbeat.
Love ya Joanne!

I hope you've enjoyed a few of these stories from Gender Mosaic's past.

Those of you who know me know that I'm interested in the history of this city. Ottawa has a very colourful past, with many larger than life characters who by their actions made this city a better place to live. I've been up here telling you about Gender Mosaic, but there's more to it than that. I've also been telling you about a piece of Ottawa history. That our history is only barely recorded in the local media doesn't matter. We all know there are many people who would still prefer that transgendered people were invisible. But our time will come. The documents are there. Our memories are real. Transgendered people aren't about to go away.

When Judy started Gender Mosaic, she made history. And when Joanne took Gender Mosaic out to the greater community, she made history too. All the people responsible for making this a successful transgender organization have made history, and in so doing they've made Ottawa – Canada's capital! as Judy used to say - a better place to live. It's true that history marches slowly sometimes. But remember this: they tore that Berlin Wall down.
Thank you very much.

EDITOR'S NOTES
by Margo Ross

15 years of supporting each other; Just the sound of those words describes an enormous weight. In fact there have been very difficult times, too little resources, too many in need and the always present reality of too few active and caring members vs those with a need.

Yet, here we are, Canada's longest continuously run transgender support group. The word transgender is almost as old as we are, for in the beginning it was cross dressers, transvestites, transsexual and drag Queens and Kings and who knows what else we called our self and what terms others used.

Members were afraid to come to meetings for fear of the reactions of others and their own internal fear and lack of safety. But look at us, we are in a public art gallery more than 100 people strong and we have a level of pride that is growing more and more each day. There are more of us transitioning today, more of us speaking out publicly, more of us seeing each other no matter where we fit or what our needs are.

There is a growing number of individuals in their teens and early twenties publicly and privately sharing who they are. I so wished I had believed that, that opportunity was there when I was their age. But then I did not even have the words to call myself only the awareness that I and I guessed others were different.

So I encourage us all to take stock of how far we have come as a group, individually and as a community and decide right here and now where we must be and what must have been achieved before we meet again on our 20th Anniversary.

Then do not what for someone else to make it happen, it is your future guide and direct it otherwise you will be a passenger to a future that you may just not like and may even be harmful to you.

Congratulation, Gender Mosaic. 15 years WOW
by Joanne Law

Gender Mosaic has been a lifeline for me, in my ability to accept myself as a human being. Believe it or not. Some of you might think that life has been easy for me. It has not! All of my life I have had to struggle struggled with my gender identity trying to fit into the boys games, what boys did, and the ever wondering of being beaten up by the boys at school, and I was. 20 years ago I lost everything. I was fired from my employment, some one told my employer about my off hours activities and they didn't want my kind on their staff. I took then to court for wrongful dismissal, I lost in a court battle and I lost a ton of money. I lost my family for many years, I over qualified and too old find new employment and failed. For 10 years I survived on welfare and I was abused by the system, I identified as female to them and they didn't like it either, but I kept on fighting for my rights as a trans female. Gender Mosaic was there for me during my transition from mental disorder to freedom. We are a part of the community that seems to fall into the crevices and holes of society. Gender Mosaic has opened the doors to allow thousands of transgender folk to meet and socialize with other like themselves so we can be normal. Some stay for a few years for the support, and some just for a few socials. Others stay on to help new people deal with their new feelings and other just disappear back into the world of compromise. That OK.

Personally I have met and listened to thousands of transgender people, either by the Gender Mosaic phone line making that first call, or in a committee room making decisions about our community. I have heard the stories on hatred, denial, and loss of self worth whatever society has placed on us for being transgender. I have known several that have committed suicide, because of their inner feelings and loss of self-respect.

I have met the most wonderful people in my life the minute that I started to deal and focus on who I was. People in the gay, lesbian and bisexual have also helped in my evolution of being Joanne. My mother was my prime support long before knowing about Gender Mosaic and she was there for me. There was not a lot of information available back then. No computers, so my resources were tabloid magazines with fictional stories. " I found my husbands stash of ladies underwear". Or " I found my husband wearing my clothes". This was my only outlet of knowing about cross-dressing.

Now Gender Mosaic is a part of my life. After the 15th

Anniversary party is over I will be stepping down from a few of my activities. I want to see the group grow with new ideas from new members but to keep the mandate of our group. I will with the board's approval keep the phone line and outreach for the transgender community through Gender Mosaic. I am not going away just changing direction; my love for my community makes me a whole person.

Commitment on Commitment by Samantha Anne Perrin

Having been asked to write a few words about "commitment" and having been reminded that "You only get out of an organization what you put into it", how could I refuse? So, for argument's sake, here are a few words on "commitment".

The more I think about it, the more I realize that the old adage just isn't true. One does not get out of an organization what one puts into it. That may hold true for your bank account, but it definitely does not hold true for a volunteer organization the aim of which is to provide support to those in need. Such an organization could be classed as a care giver for, in fact, the organization is there to give, not to take.

So what happens when the care giver is no longer willing, or able, to provide the needed service? What if the care giving organization no longer has "givers"? What then? What happens when the care giver has been sucked dry? How often does the care giver meet life's end before the care taker?

In the case of a care giver providing an individual with care, if that care giver is no longer able to provide for that person one of two things happens; either the person needing care finds someone else, or that person dies of neglect.

In the case of an organization... well that's quite a different story.

First let's sub-divide care giving organizations into two distinct groups: those that consist entirely of care givers, such as hospitals; and those that are comprised of both care givers and those in need of help, such as Gender Mosaic.

"Ah hah!" you say, "I thought you would get around to us."

Yes indeed, what about us? Well for one, we do fall within that second group. We have members who need support, (and I think perhaps it's a pretty safe bet to say that we all fall into that group), and members who can, and do, provide support. Thank God for the latter! For were it not for them the group would die. No question about it. How can an organization survive if all its members are simply takers? It can't. ***Somebody*** has to give.

And that, dear friends, is where commitment comes in.

Commitment, in our case, does not necessarily mean providing support specifically to another member who happens to be wrestling with some thorny issue. It doesn't necessarily mean getting up in front of the gathered throng to talk about some aspect of Transgenderism which you have researched. It doesn't mean that you have to be politically active, or that you hold an executive position withing Gender Mosaic.

Well, if it doesn't mean that sort of thing, just what does it mean?

It means just being there!

That's right... just being there! But not just being there in the sense of "there to take". By being there you are lending support to the entire organization. By 'being there' at special events sponsored by the group your presence alone says a lot. It says you are one of the group. It says that you care about the group. It says that you care about the others in the group. It says you support the group. It says that you endorse what it is that the group stands for. It says that you are committed.

And most important, when enough members are committed

to the group, to the newcomer it says that the group is strong enough to provide the support that they are so desperately seeking.

"OK. If everyone in the group is 'just there' nothing would ever get done," you might argue. "Somebody has to 'give'. Somebody has to do the work."

Very true! But let me remind you about something which you already know. Commitment is infectious. And as those needing help get it and overcome their difficulties, and grow, and blossom it is not unusual that they want to become involved in some part of the organization which has brought them to where they are. For by 'being there' it is difficult not to share, and it is difficult not to give. And in that 'giving' the individual rises above herself and comes away a better person, a stronger person, with a stronger sense of self worth. Not only has the one in need been lifted, the giver has also been lifted.

Be there! Be committed! The rest follows naturally.

Reflection
by Kaitlin Acres, Ombudsperson

At significant times, like anniversaries, it is common to sit back and reflect on events or perhaps on ones life. This being the 15th anniversary issue of NFTU I felt I would like to contribute an item. In considering what I would write I found myself thinking about myself and what has happened to me since 1997 when I became part of Gender Mosaic. After many, many years I have finally allowed myself to be myself.

A few weeks ago I was interviewed by a young university student. Her first question was "How do you describe yourself." I surprised both of us by saying "I'm a misfit." At first I wasn't sure why I said that because I usually say that "I'm gender enriched". However I realized that without thinking I spoke the truth. I am a misfit! Further I realized that I am quite happy with that statement. I am a person who does not fit into the social norms of society, at least in respect to gender. In fact neither do I fit into norms of some parts of the Transgender community. I'm happy with that too.

Being a misfit is not always comfortable. It has meant that for most of my life I have had to pretend that I'm someone I'm not. Otherwise I would be rejected by society and, more importantly, by myself. I have now discovered there are those who are quite at ease with 'misfits' and that I can be quite at ease with myself. In fact there are those who not only accept my "misfit nature" but value it.

It is interesting that the truth of this has been experienced, not so much in the transgender community, though it has been very helpful, but in the lesbian community. Some little while ago I was invited into this community and have been welcomed and valued. This has been an incredible experience.

There is a value in being a misfit, rejected by society. It is not comfortable and not to be sought out. But when rejection is truly felt it ceases to be an intellectual concept and becomes real. It has been said that "what you experience is not so important, it is what you do with the experience that matters". Rejection can result in a hostile bitter personality. I have been fortunate to be accepted by people who have experienced the pain of rejection and judgement and so have learned the value of acceptance.

In the past years I have learned the value of being a misfit. The resulting lessons have been invaluable. These lessons have come by way of many members of the G.M community and those I have met by way of being a part of Gender Mosaic.

Gender Mosaic has been a source of acceptance and self affirmation for many for the past 15 years. It is a trust that is ours to nurture and develop so that others that follow through the years to come will also experience these benefits.

To paraphrase Joanne, "Let us continue to support the group that supported us".

The Ring of Love
By Joanne Law

I have over the last 20 years, in my new identity, as a transgender female has been quite remarkable and rewarding. I have challenged US border crossing guards, flight crews and security at airports and explaining to CBC radio 1, who we are and some of the issues we face everyday, during a full one hour live conversation broadcast coast to coast. I remember driving to the east coast and receiving my very first speeding ticket in the Gaspe. I have crashed labour and union national conferences and brought the issue of gender identity to the front. All of these stories and many more are written are in our Gender Mosaic news letter Notes From The Underground. Some stories are more vivid that others like my receiving the Trinity Award in Louisville Kentucky, Going to my first bridal shower and attending my first wedding. It's the growing of me that I realize I have never been happier. The next paragraphs my continuing saga.

Something happing to me Christmas Eve 2002 at my sisters home. Every time I tell my story I start to cry. We had gathered for this festive season and a delicious Christmas Eve dinner. My sister and my brothers with their partners and children, my cousins and nieces and nephews were all there. My sister and her husband had prepared a delicious roast beef platter, Yorkshire pudding, several types of vegetables, potatoes and of course gravy. There were several kinds of dessert pies and apple crumble. The meal was delicious. We filled our face with lots left over to be frozen and eaten later. During the meal there was wonderful conversation between the 15 people sitting around the table. After the meal we had an after diner drink.

Still siting at the table my sister nodded to her husband and they both got up and left. Returning several minutes later they sat down and they handed me a small Christmas wrapped gift, everybody was looking at me with excitement. Before I opened the gift I thanked my family for accepting me with their love and support of their new sister and aunt, it took longer to say than do. I trembled opening the gift, not knowing why I was the only one to receive such a surprise gift, inside the wrapped Christmas paper there was a ring box. I opened the ring box and there was my mothers diamond ring that she wore for over 75 years. My sister had it removed before my mother was cremated last year. She had kept it until the time was right to give it to me. I cried with happiness as my family had given this precious gift, my sister's comment was, this is for the next women in the family from all of us to you for your new name change. Merry Christmas Joanne. The glasses were raised in a toast, I did not know what to do, I was at a loss for words. It was a complete surprise, I guess that my hormones kicked in as more tears rolled down my face. There is a saying "Laugh and the crowd laughs with you, Cry and your mascara runs" Well my face required a tissue every few minutes. All the women sitting at the table cried with me. I tried on the ring and it fit past my first knuckle on my small finger, my eyes focussed every few seconds of this wonderful family gift. I hugged everybody for just being there. I have always felt the love from my family but this ring was from my late mother for her new daughter and at the same time, full acceptance of my family for their new sister Joanne.

I had to have it cleaned and repaired as it was 75 years old, made of white gold and 6 diamonds, and never off my mothers finger. I had it sized and repaired and I only wear it on weekends, as I am afraid of losing it when I am working. Every time I look at it I see my mother and I think how lucky I am to have had a mother like her and to be loved by my siblings and the people that know me. I am blessed.

I keep telling people how wonderful life is, I guess I am lucky.

The Gender Variant Phenomenon--A Developmental Review by Anne Vitale PhD
(Shortened to fit this format, full document available on our website)

ABSTRACT
Living in conflict with one of the basic tenets of existence (Am I male or am I female?) is understandably anxiety provoking. This fact leads me to suggest that Gender Identity Disorder as this conflict is described in the DSM IV, is not an appropriate descriptor. I suggest here as I have elsewhere (Vitale, 1997, 2001) that instead the condition be termed Gender Expression Deprivation Anxiety Disorder (GEDAD). After explaining my thinking on gender expression deprivation anxiety, I will describe how this anxiety, if left untreated, is manifested in each of the five developmental stages of life: confusion and rebellion in childhood, false hopes and disappointment in adolescence, hesitant compliance in early adulthood, feelings of self induced entrapment in middle age, and if still untreated, depression and resignation in old age.

There is a growing body of evidence that Gender Identity Disorder (GID) as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (DSM IV) (1994) is at least in part, the result of insufficient or inappropriate androgenization of the brain at a critical stage of embryonic development. As a result, the affected individual may be left with somewhere between a partial and a full sense of having a cross-sexed gender identity. Essentially creating a not-male, not-female but otherwise permanent gender variant condition. Even though there apparently are some individuals who fall very close to or dead-center on the gender identity spectrum, most gender variant people can easily identify with being closer to one end of the spectrum then the other.

Given the probable cause, it is reasonable to assume there are many permutations of the way gender variant individuals relate to their condition. However, people who present for treatment routinely fall into three distinct groups: Two groups of female-identified males(Group One and Group Three in this paper) and one group of male-identified females (Group Two).

Group One (G1) is best described as those natal males who have a high degree of cross-sexed gender identity. In these individuals, we can hypothesize that the prenatal androgenization process--if there was any at all--was minimal, leaving the default female identity intact. Furthermore, the expression of female identity of those individuals appears impossible or very difficult for them to conceal.

Group Two (G2) is composed of natal females who almost universally report a life- long history of rejecting female dress conventions along with, girls' toys and activities, and have a strong distaste for their female secondary sex characteristics. These individuals typically take full advantage of the social permissiveness allowed women in many societies to wear their hair short and dress in loose, gender-neutral clothing. These individuals rarely marry, preferring instead to partner with women who may or may not identify as lesbian. Group Two is the mirror image of Group One.

Group Three (G3) is composed of natal males who identify as female but who act and appear normally male. We can hypothesize that prenatal androgenization was sufficient to allow these individuals to appear and act normally as males but insufficient to establish a firm male gender identity. For these female-identified males, the result is a more complicated and insidious sex/gender discontinuity. Typically, from earliest childhood these individuals suffer increasingly painful and chronic gender dysphoria. They tend to live secretive lives, often making increasingly stronger attempts to

convince themselves and others that they are male.

As a psychotherapist I have found female identified males (G1) to be clinically similar to male-identified females (G2). That is, individuals in both groups have little or no compunction against openly presenting themselves as the other sex. Further, they make little or no effort to engage in what they feel for them would be wrong gendered social practices (i.e., the gender role assigned at birth as the basis of authority). Although I have seen some notable exceptions, especially in male-identified females, these individuals--at the time of presentation for treatment--are rarely married or have children, are rarely involved in the corporate or academic culture and are typically involved in the service industry at a blue- or pink-collar level. With little investment in trying to live as their assigned birth sex and with a lot of practice in living as closely as possible to their desired sex, these individuals report relatively low levels of anxiety about their dilemma. For those who decide transition is in their best interest, they accomplish the change with relatively little difficulty, particularly compared to G3, female-identified males.

The story is very different for Group Three. In the hope of ridding themselves of their dysphoria they tend to invest heavily in typical male activities. Being largely heterosexual, they marry and have children, hold advanced educational degrees and are involved at high levels of corporate and academic cultures. These are the invisible or cloistered gender dysphorics. They develop an aura of deep secrecy based on shame and risk of ridicule and their secret desire to be female is protected at all costs. The risk of being found out adds to the psychological and physiological pressures they experience. Transitioning from this deeply entrenched defensive position is very difficult. The irony here is that gender dysphoric symptoms appear to worsen in direct proportion to their self-enforced entrenchment in the male world. The further an individual gets from believing he can ever live as a female, the more acute and disruptive his dysphoria becomes.

Given gender identity permanency and its obvious importance in the ordering of one's life, it is reasonable to consider gender identity as essential existential knowledge, knowledge that can not be unknown or separated out from the whole without radically redefining the whole.

For all three groups described here, I believe it is safe to say that gender dysphoria is the single most dominating influence during developmental stages in all three groups. In this paper, I will take examples from my case load to show how gender dysphoria effects these people at each of the classic five stages of life: childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, midlife and old age.

Living in conflict with one of the basic tenets of existence (Am I male or am I female?) is certainly anxiety provoking. This fact leads me to suggest that Gender Identity Disorder is not an appropriate descriptor. I suggest here as I have elsewhere (Vitale, 1997, 2001) that instead the condition be termed Gender Expression Deprivation Anxiety Disorder (GEDAD). After explaining my thinking on gender expression deprivation anxiety, I will describe how this anxiety, if left untreated, is manifested in each of the five developmental stages of life: confusion and rebellion in childhood, false hopes and disappointment in adolescence, hesitant compliance in early adulthood, feelings of self induced entrapment in middle age, and if still untreated, depression and resignation in old age.

Untreated GEDAD as it is manifested across the five stages of life

The periodic need to cross-dress or otherwise express cross-gender behaviour is a common element in gender dysphoria. Costume is obviously a form of gender expression. For people who are not gender dysphoric, cross dressing on a lark or for some other reason may be fun but in someone who is gender

dysphoric, it is an essential aspect of their life. Some individuals with mild gender dysphoria come to terms with their cross-dressing/cross-gender behavioural needs and may even celebrate them with public presentations. Others have a far more negative view of their need to express cross-gender behaviour and keep that part of their life private. Either way these individuals stay largely within the primary physiological bounds of their assigned gender. The problems they encounter are primarily social ones, the two most important being family pressures to conform, and the potential embarrassment of discovery.

For individuals with a mild to moderate form of dysphoria, life is tolerable and they rarely make any overt attempt to live outside prescribed social norms. For those with a more extreme dysphoria, mild palliatives such as periodic cross-dressing, although helpful, becomes insufficient. These individuals appear to need to inhabit and live out the cross-sexed identity.

Terminology

In the DSM III-R (1987) people suffering from gender dysphoria were referred to as "Transsexuals." When the DSM was updated in 1994, the term "Transsexual" was replaced with "Gender Identity Disorder." This is not an improvement. The term Gender Identity Disorder implies that one's physiological sex is correct and that one's inner sense of gender is disordered or wrong. It is clear that this is not how gender dysphoric individuals perceive their condition. This is evident both in psychologists' inability to change a person's sense of gender with therapy and the ready preference of many of these individuals to undergo physical sex reassignment.

Despite the official diagnostic title of Gender Identity Disorder, what gender specialists really treat are disassociation (Seil, 1997), depression and anxiety (i.e., dysphoria). Of these three symptoms, resulting of the double burden of being hormonally and socially deprived of true gender fulfilment, I have found anxiety to be the most acute.

Gender fulfilment can occur on both psychological and physiological levels.

Psychological pressure comes from society's strong expectations that one conform to one's assigned gender role. This an obvious tenet. Physiological pressure is less obvious but most likely results from the inability of the individual's body to produce sufficient cross-sex hormones. This becomes evident in the fact that within days or weeks of receiving cross-sex hormones, dysphoric individuals exhibit markedly lower anxiety. This procedure is so reliable that it is the second step in a the triadic treatment plan described in the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's (HBIGDA) Standards of Care. (W. Meyer, et al.,2001). Hormonal treatment is considered both a verifier of gender dysphoria and a treatment. Further, as treatment continues, the resulting cross-sex feminization or masculinization typically reduces and eventually eliminates the anxiety entirely (W. Meyer, et al.,2001).

Treatment:

Although there is still some disagreement as to how gender dysphoria begins and who should qualify for hormonal and surgical intervention, there is a remarkable amount of agreement in several important areas. Most psychologists now agree that gender dysphoria qualifies as a subject of clinical attention separate from other disorders. Further, most clinicians agree that the gender identity beliefs these people hold are profound, deep seated, and non-delusional. Even more significantly, outcome studies now clearly indicate that when three conditions are met: a proper differential diagnosis, a significantly long trial period of living in the gender of choice, and a satisfactory surgical result, there is only a small incidence of post-operative regret. Indeed, in a review of the outcome literature Pfafflin (1992) reports that less than 1% of the female-to-male

transsexuals who had undergone sex reassignment had any regrets. For male-to-female transsexuals the number was slightly higher at less than 2%. Later studies supporting Pfafflin's report include Bodlund O. et al., (1996); Cohen-Kettenis P.T (1997); Exner, K. et al., (1995); Rakic, Z. et al., (1996), and Smith Y. L. et al., (2001). It should be noted that satisfaction is measured by self report of improvement in the individual's psycho social well being.

Since everyone, even an intersexed child, is raised as either a boy or a girl even in the most non-sexist environment (Stein, 1984), a chain of physiological and societal events begins at birth that propel the individual into a predetermined set of behavioural expectations. In a bicameral sexed culture, deviating from those expectations almost invariably results in social conflict. The individual's quality of life, his or her relationship with family, friends, career, legal gender status and the nature of his or her being in the universe, are all at stake.

If we keep in mind that gender identity is in reality a continuum, and if what one looks like may not correspond to what one feels like, we can expect a corresponding mild-to-severe range in gender related anxiety.

What follows is a synopsis of what I have learned from treating and conducting interviews with approximately 350 adults presenting with gender issues between 1978 and 2000. The age range is between 17 and 71. My comments on how GEDAD is experienced in childhood are taken from self-report of adults in individual and group sessions. To augment my limited clinical work with children I have also cited the work of Kenneth Zucker and Susan Bradley (1985).

In what follows I describe five distinct developmental stages, that make up the standard periods of developmental psychology: childhood, adolescence, young adult, middle age, and older adult.

Childhood

As early as age two and half, most children begin showing a preference for behaviours and activities consistent with their assigned sex. By age three, they actually refer to themselves as a boy or a girl. Interviews with three-year-olds reveal that they agree with statements such as girls like to play with dolls, ask for help and talk more than boys, while boys like to play with cars, build things, and hit other children.

Even the casual observer can see that children place a high priority on gender-appropriate behaviour at an early age. Most individuals with gender expression deprivation anxiety report becoming aware that something was not right with their original gender assignment as early as age four. Males emphasize their experience that, unlike other problems a four-year-old boy may be able to discuss with friends or parents, wanting to be a girl was definitely to be avoided.

Even though my example below dates back forty years, I think it is still safe to say that a boy who wants to be a girl and is willing to admit it today can expect to be "corrected," often in a very stern and firm way or his desires ignored as "something he will grow out of." For example, Arlene who is now in her fifties, reported a traumatic incident in school when, at the age of six, she (then he), was made to stand in front of his first-grade class wearing a large pink ribbon while his classmates were encouraged to laugh at him. He was being "corrected" for having been "caught" playing hopscotch with the girls during recess. Here is an example of a form of behavioural modification meant to insure immediate cessation of effeminate behaviour in a male.

On the other hand a girl who wants to be a boy and is willing to admit it can expect far less retribution for her behaviour. Girls who affect boyish behaviour are generally perceived as cute and the behaviour is usually tolerated by friends, family and school officials through childhood. Although they

reported mild social pressure to "dress pretty" and be more gentle, none of the male-identified female clients I have worked with have shared experiencing behavioural modification efforts like the one endured by the hopscotch-playing boy.

Undoubtedly, there are cases where only guidance and time are needed to correct a gender identity misunderstanding in a child. In others, however, it appears that once gender identity is established, no amount of redirecting can change the child's gender identification. Some boys in particular openly endure the taunts of their peers and castigations of their parents in order to live according to their cross-gender understanding. The Child and Adolescent Gender Identity Clinic of Toronto treats many such children brought in by parents who are concerned over what they believe is unacceptable cross-gender behaviour. Zucker and Bradly, reporting on the clinic's outcomes, report a high rate of helping these families. Interestingly, Ken Zucker and Susan Bradley (1995, p32), report a referral ratio of male children to female children entered for treatment since 1978 (n=249) to be 6.3 to 1. Since there is no evidence that cross-gender behaviour occurs more often in boys than it does in girls, a possible interpretation of this statistic is that effeminacy in boys may be considered by parents to be more upsetting and in need of correction than tomboyish behaviour in girls.

Given the nature of the disorder and the ability of some children to conceal it, I believe that most children with gender dysphoria are never diagnosed as such. Those children cope by sticking rigorously to the role expected of them. Privately, however, they continue to go deeper and deeper into a highly guarded parallel world of cross-gender envy and fantasy. Given their propensity to be studious, detached and self absorbed, I have come to think of these children as living cloistered lives. These children grow up to form the core of Group Three.

Little is known about gender dysphoric boys who privately struggle to fit into their expected gender role. With no apparent problem, (many adult GID clients report being exceptionally well behaved as children) they simply go unobserved by clinicians studying GID. Yet from interviewing adults with gender dysphoria, I can report that the problem was as real for them then as it is now. Here are some of their childhood reflections.

The underlying feelings most often stated were of detachment and confusion, a sense of not really fitting in though family and teachers consistently rewarded them for their behaviour. One of the most common areas of confusion was the sex assignment process itself. Although we as adults may think it simplistic, many children are completely perplexed as to why some children are assigned as boys and others as girls. Given a tendency toward privacy and modesty in our society, many children, especially those without siblings, often have no way of knowing that there is a physical difference between themselves and those differently assigned.

Andrea, a 35-year-old male-to-female, post-operative transsexual recalls that she was completely perplexed over her assignment as male until when she was seven her sister was born. While first watching her mother change her sister's diaper, she learned for the first time that her assignment as a boy was based on a real physical difference. Although it cleared up part of the confusion, she realized, even at that early age, that her identity concerns were far more complicated and serious then she had first imagined.

As Andrea above, it is common for clients to report thinking in childhood that gender assignment was based on parental preference and therefore open for redress. Girls are especially aggressive in their insistence that they are really boys. Indeed many are so insistent that they go on to act for all intents and purposes as

though they are boys, a pattern they carry into adulthood.

For cloistered gender dysphoric boys it was in the area of peers and activities, especially sports, that the problem was most noticeable. Unable or uninterested in competing in organized boys' activities and having been shuffled decidedly away from playing with the girls, many became reclusive. To add to their confusion, and counter to behaviour typically reported in openly gender dysphoric boys, many cloistered boys actually preferred solo play with boys' toys and had little or no interest in girls' toys. For example I have heard more than one long-time post-op male-to-female transsexual speak fondly of having spent countless hours playing with an Erector Set or a Lionel model train set-up that their father had helped them build. Others described of designing and making detailed model aeroplanes, race cars and sailing ships. The more academic of this group report little or no interest in sports and rough and tumble play. To avoid castigation from their peers, they report spending a lot of time reading and studying. However, although these children appeared to be normal boys doing what most people would consider some normal boy activities, they may very well have been doing so while secretly wearing their mother's or sister's underwear, fantasizing about being a girl or both if they could manage it.

Like many children faced with difficulties they are powerless to change, such as family anger and divorce, gender dysphoric children often seek supernatural help with their special problem. This is usually in the form of praying to God and practising special religious indulgences. This practice has an inherent opportunity for secondary gain. Almost universally they report that they believed that if God interceded for them by changing their sex, their parents and the world would have to exonerate them from what they typically perceive to be a negative and shameful desire.

Adolescence

If there was ever going to be a chance for these individuals to show that they are not really the gender everyone else believes they are, early adolescence is certainly it. Virtually every individual I have interviewed reported wanting desperately to have hidden internal sex organs of the desired gender finally come to life during adolescence, giving them the desired secondary sex characteristics.

G1 boys, who have a strong feminine core identity, typically develop a sexual interest in other boys during adolescence and prefer girls as peer friends. Although they still desire to be girls, they appear to have significantly less anxiety over not being female then that reported by the boys in G3. I believe this is due to the relatively uninhibited open expression of their femininity. For example Monica was 19 years old when she reported to my office accompanied by her mother. She wore gender-neutral clothing but otherwise presented as female in voice inflection and mannerisms. The problem, of course, was that Monica was genetically male. Monica's mother related to me that Monica had been more like a girl then a boy all her life. Her and her husband loved her dearly but thought of

Thy are more as a daughter then a son. Over the course of treating Monica, it became clear that although she was distressed over her male physiology, she was otherwise emotionally stable and very aware of the seriousness of her situation. Once it became clear that she was her own person and ready to undergo transition, a course of hormone replacement therapy was introduced. With the exception of having to face some extreme religious issues brought up by her much older brother, she accomplished an almost effortless transition from male to female. The presence of family support and little or no investment by the family or Monica in her being male made this transition straight forward.

As sexual maturity advances, Group Three, cloistered gender dysphoric boys, often combine excessive masturbation (one

individual reported masturbating up to 5 and even 6 times a day) with an increase in secret cross-dressing activity to release anxiety. In a post-op group I facilitated, Jenna (age 43) spoke fondly of the delight she experienced as a boy when she would find something of her mom's in the dirty clothes' hamper in the bathroom. Two others in the group laughingly agreed that they too took many a trip to the bathroom for the same reason. At the same time, in their public life, these boys report employing overtly stereotypical efforts to draw attention from their secret desires to be female by affecting appearances of being normally male. This includes dating girls, participating in individual sports activities such as swimming, running, golf, tennis, and for some, even body building.

Cloistered (G3) gender dysphoric boys appear to others and even to themselves to be heterosexual. Although as a group they are not especially active daters, they clearly prefer to date girls when they do date. Significantly, unlike other boys, their dating motives are markedly different. For these boys, being on a date with a girl is a chance to spend time with a girl in a way not generally allowed under other circumstances. Dating serves two purposes for these boys. The first is social, as it gives them the all-important appearance of being normal. The second is therapeutic. Being close to a girl's softness, and even her female smell, has a mitigating effect on gender expression deprivation anxiety. The fantasy is not to make love to her but to actually be her.

The situation is less complex for girls. Having more social freedom in both their dress and behaviour codes allows at least a modicum of dysphoric relief. Loose, gender-neutral clothing is typically worn to hide their feminizing bodies and there is little or no attempt to appear or act female. Many adult female-to-male transsexuals report having adopted a defiant attitude toward the world as a coping strategy. As with all teenagers, gender dysphoric girls must contend with emerging sexuality. These girls may go out of their way to dissuade boys from showing interest in them while being interested in other girls in a way that parallels that of heterosexual teenage boys.

Early Adulthood

As more information about transition to one's felt gender identity becomes available to the general public, we are seeing genetic males with strong core female identities and genetic females with strong core male gender identities present in their early twenties with the clear objective to being sexually reassigned.

The cloistered, natal males, on the other hand typically start to realize the seriousness of their dilemma at this age. It is common to hear reports of these individuals increasing the intensity with which they try to rid themselves of the ever-increasing gender-related anxiety. Many individuals paradoxically adopt homophobic, transphobic, and overtly sexist attitudes in the hope that they will override their desires to be female.

The situation can become so convoluted that some gender dysphoric men come to therapy wanting, almost desperately, to be told that they are not transsexual. That would be understandable if they were simply confused and wanted to get to the bottom of their problem. Unfortunately, their stated preference here appears to be more a form of avoidance of the fear and complexities involved in transitioning than it is an honest desire to remain men. For example, there are natal males who desperately want to have breasts but say they would be terribly embarrassed to have them show in public. There are others who wince at the thought of having a female name like Janice or Mary or Linda. There are also gender dysphoric males who think that the social behaviours that most differentiate women from men -- are frivolous and unimportant. Going so far as to believe that women are "less than" men and being embarrassed about wanting to be like them.

Interestingly, these people have no trouble at all with wearing feminine apparel -- as long as they can do it in complete privacy.

Perhaps the most insidious form of sexism can be seen in the gender dysphoric male who has attained a respected position in a male-dominated profession. These people routinely assert the common sexist attitude that although women are now allowed a certain professional tolerance, the real players are still men. As more people transition while continuing to work at the same position, these transsexual males see firsthand how public respect between men can quickly turn into private ridicule when a male colleague becomes a woman. Further more, some gender dysphoric individuals have confessed to participating in sexist jokes as a way to divert even the remotest suspicion from themselves. Given these seemingly unacceptable obstacles, many gender dysphoric males unconsciously accept certain male driven notions about women in an effort to purge the need to be female out of their mind.

When these individuals are questioned further, it is common to see that they have a deep-seated, love/hate relationship with their inward need to be female. While they apparently need do nothing to keep the love side of that dilemma alive, the hate side seems to need constant care and feeding. The danger is obvious: As they see it, if they don't continuously think negatively about women, they might have to face the reality of wanting to be one. In essence, the sexism in this group serves as a cover, providing a convenient, and unfortunately a socially acceptable way to maintain denial.

Another common attempt to "make it"- as a man by gender dysphoric males in this age range is to marry and have children. Unlike their non-dysphoric male peers, these men's attraction toward the idea of family is not the standard one. Some individuals report telling their partners about their life long desires to be female before getting married, but the vast majority do not, perhaps from fear of ridicule or rejection, or because they maintain the fantasy that marriage will provide a cure. Many clients report that they were sure that being a husband would cement their maleness. This logic, unfortunately, gets extended to the idea of having children. Although gender dysphoric males are generally no better or worse as fathers then the next man, they soon come to realize that what they had hoped would be an answer has instead complicated their gender issues enormously.

In distinct contrast, genetic females who do not seek sex reassignment make little or no concerted effort to be rid of their gender dysphoria. Although they may be deeply disturbed by having acquired female secondary sex characteristics in puberty, many assume an androgynous appearance and affect outright male mannerisms. In larger cities, they may find refuge by taking active roles in the lesbian community and being involved in typically male occupations.

Meanwhile, gender dysphoric people must live in the real world, being subject to the same developmental pressures as their peers. Developmental psychologists refer to the ages between 28 and 33 as a time when individuals reassess their dreams and aspirations. Mistaken interests, family obligations and career demands start to become serious concerns. For women who are reaching the later part of their childbearing years, their children are now in school or yet to be born. New decisions have to be made relative to the bulk of life that still lies ahead. When someone contending with a gender identity issue reaches this pivotal period, the pressures are magnified far beyond what others experience.

Gender dysphoric individuals respond to this critical period in two characteristic ways. A growing number of people (those who have access to information and other resources) now go directly to

giving serious consideration to changing their sex. After an appropriate period of psychotherapy and evaluation by a gender specialist, these individuals almost routinely go on to be physically and legally reassigned to the sex that more closely fits their inner sense of self. Others, who may also be aware of sex reassignment options, may find the idea too impractical or too frightening, deciding instead to entrench themselves deeper into life as a member of their originally assigned sex.

Middle Age

For those who continue to struggle inwardly with their gender issues into mid-life, new issues come to the fore. As a time when most people realize that about half of life has been lived and feel the need to make an accounting of who they are and what they have done with their lives, this period can be especially anxiety provoking for the gender-dysphoric individual. Decades of trying to overcome an increasing gender expression deprivation anxiety begin to weigh heavily on the individual. Family and career are now as deeply rooted as they will ever be. The idea of starting over as a member of a different sex has become seemingly impossible. The fact that the need to change sex has increased rather than diminished, despite Herculean efforts, is now undeniable.

These individuals often show up in therapy offices with symptoms mimicking Depression or Generalized Anxiety Disorder. They complain of panic attacks, irritability, sleeping disorder, inability to concentrate, and recent weight loss. If they are married, there is often serious martial discord due to self-imposed disassociation from the family unit. Job performance may also be affected, it is not uncommon the hear reports of individuals experiencing negative performance revues or outright threats of being fired unless they seek help for whatever is bothering them. Pressed ever deeper into despair, suicidal thoughts begin to intrude into daily life. Even at this point the individual may be reluctant to discuss their gender issues lest the door be opened to a fear-laden real-world exploration of gender transition. They are consumed by feelings of being inexorably trapped.

John, a 50 year-old genetic male, medical research scientist, married (23 years), father of three children aged 20, 17 and 7, phoned me after experiencing a panic attack severe enough to require emergency attention from paramedics at the airport on his way to give a presentation at a conference. John gave me only his first name and informed me that I was the first to be told what he was about to tell me. He said he was "gender dysphoric" and that he was "desperate." Feelings that were once "controllable through sheer force of will," had increased to where he now was having protracted periods where he would close his office door, lie on the floor and weep quietly while curled up in the fetal position, holding his genitals in pain. Other than intrusive and repeated fantasies of being female, he had refused to allow himself any overt form of female gender expression. He reported feeling that if he was to cross-dress and be caught, he would dishonour his wife and family. Having attained international recognition for his work, he was also concerned about his professional reputation. The only other form of temporary relief came through masturbating, often up to five times a day.

Our work together over the last three years has been slow. However, with the help of extensive individual, group, and family psychotherapy, augmented by estrogen replacement therapy, with the full permission of his family, John has recently taken on a female name and is living full time in the female gender role. She is in the process of renewing and redefining her relationship with her family, and has successfully returned to work after an extended leave of absence.

Older Adult

Some gender dysphoric individuals proceed into their senior years with their needs and desires to be female still unresolved. Even now the natal male's feelings about the matter may be as strong as ever. The relative freedom of gender expression that women enjoy throughout their lives continues, and there is even less pressure on G2 females to be attractive or feminine now than when they were younger. For natal males, the situation is reversed.

Little is known about these individuals. That they exist, however, is indisputable. Surgeons report performing sex re-assignment surgery on individuals as old as 71. I have personally worked with four natal males in their early to mid sixties. Colleagues in my peer-supervision group report working with others in their mid-sixties to early seventies.

The issues these individuals face are now very different. Concerns about how to be a father to young children, maintain a career, and establish intimate relationships have lessened. New, less resolvable issues emerge. Along with low self esteem brought on from years of self denial, these individuals must now contend with a deteriorating male body.

Along with balding and paunchiness, there are more serious health issues to consider if an older person wishes to transition to the other gender role. Cardiac disorders, gastro intestinal disorders, diabetes and, often, liver dysfunction due to a life time of alcohol abuse are some of the most common. Here is a statement from Tom, a 63-year-old natal male who was notifying me that he was leaving a "starter" group I facilitate after attending for two months:

"I have recently completed a year and a half of interferon and riboviron treatment for Hepetitus C. That means that anything like hormones could be detrimental to my liver health. No doctor would approve that. Short of that I don't believe that there is any in-between for me given my health, age, appearance, marriage and family. I believe now that I have to live my life as a gentle male and that is most comfortable for me. Not ideal but most comfortable."

A mitigating factor for Tom and other seniors, ironically, is that the natural aging process decreases their serum testosterone level resulting in a corresponding increase in estrogen level. The feminizing effects, albeit mild, are welcomed whole-heartedly. As in hormone replacement therapy for younger men, the natural hormonal changes appear to ease some of the psychological aspects of the dysphoria in seniors. Yet when interviewed, those who chose to remain male speak of a clear longing for what might have been. Senior gender dysphoric males typically report they have been waiting, many since childhood in the hope that their desire to be female would simply "go away." Like those who are younger, they say in resignation that if they had known the dysphoria was going to remain such a strong force in their lives, they would have braved anything to face their dilemma decades sooner.

There is one other problem this population faces. In interviews, one gets the impression that the struggle to contain their gender expression deprivation anxiety--in and of itself--has become deeply ingrained in their psyche. It is as if the gender dysphoria has become a critical component of who they have become. Characteristically these people can be described as sad, depressed and deeply resentful. In treating these individuals, the best that can be done is to help them feel better about cross-dressing and encourage them to have contact with other cross-dressers their age. Success of sorts can be as simple as helping someone find the courage to shave off a moustache behind which he has been hiding his gender issues for forty years.

Conclusion

Clinically, gender dysphoria shares symptoms often associated with Dissociative Disorder, Depression and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Differential diagnosis may be complicated by the client's reluctance to disclose the source

of the morbidity for fear of being overcome by real or imagined outcomes of the disclosure.

Gender identity issues can be a life-long condition for those who find it too difficult to deal with directly. Each life stage presents new dilemmas and decisions in relation to this core issue. In general it can be said that the more the individual struggles to rid themselves of gender dysphoria by increasing social and physical investments in their assigned sex, the greater the generalized anxiety and the harder it becomes to restart life sexually reassigned. For those individuals who, despite all obstacles, can transition to a new gender role, it has been shown that gender transition that includes psychotherapy, hormonal therapy and--in most cases--gender reassignment surgery, significantly reduce and eventually eliminates the anxiety entirely.

NEW OPPORTUNITY

Wives and Significant Others of TG People

If you have questions, concerns and/or issues that you would like to share with others in similar relationships, there is an educational/support group initiated by "Making a Difference Counselling and Consultation". The group will be for you and take place in a private, comfortable office with a qualified counsellor in attendance. (Helma Seidl, MSW, RSW).

Time: Friday evening 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., (The same weekend of the Gender Mosaic Social)

Place: 504-177 Nepean St.

Contact: For information or to register

phone (613 749-8008).

Those attending will decide the topics and style of the meetings.

This group will be for you. This group has the endorsement of the Executive of Gender Mosaic and will function independently.

You may also contact Barb by email at, koolacres@yahoo.ca

IT IS Your Mail Box TO

The Gender Mosaic, PO Box 7421, Vanier Ontario. K1L 8E4 can be used by all members for their packages, delivery of books or magazines.

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